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31 May 1961

SUBJECT: What briefing, if any, was given the Brigade or the Brigade's staff on going guerrilla.

REFERENCE: Paragraph F. of Memorandum Dated 22 May 1961.

The following is a summation of actions involving preparation and instruction for contingency employment of the 2506 Brigade in the event elements of the Brigade or the unit in total suffered defeat and were forced to operate as guerrillas.

1. All officers and the original cadre (some 375 personnel) which formed the 2506 Brigade received extensive instruction (in excess of 13 weeks) in guerrilla warfare organization tactics and techniques. It was with considerable difficulty and only after strenuous instruction on conventional operations that the officers of the Brigade were weaned from their marked inclination to guerrilla operations. Many of the unit leaders had in fact operated as guerrillas either with Castro forces in the fight against Batista or in the later operations against Castro after he had seized power.

2. During the evening, staff and operations classes conducted during the Brigade training cycle extending from November 1960 through March 1961, several discussions were held on the subject of a conventional force defeated in the field and forced to continue resistance as a guerrilla element. Circumstances and ways of means of organizing and operating in various parts of Cuba were discussed in detail. These discussions did not cover the Zapata area specifically for security reasons, but covered the other feasible areas to include the Escambrays, Pinar del Rio and the Oriente. These discussions were not covered with any specific direction towards the Brigade operation in these locales, but were

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in the nature of contingency operations planning, i.e., "in the event we suffered defeat and it was physically possible, we would attempt to break contact and retire to a redoubt area where we would initiate guerrilla activities." The stated mission of the Brigade for which it was organized and trained was to land by sea and air and fight a conventional conflict as an organized military force. At no time did the Brigade once organized receive training to fight as a guerrilla force. To have attempted to conduct such training would have detracted from the purpose for which the Brigade was organized and would have been detrimental to morale. An indigenous force of the size of the Brigade cannot be organized and trained in the time allocated to concurrently accomplish both missions (conventional military role and guerrilla force role) satisfactorily.

4. During the pre-staging briefings of commanders and key staff officers at the training base in Guatemala (period 25 March to 7 April 1961) the operation plan (less locale and target date) were briefed to the Brigade Commander, Deputy Commander and S-3. Contingency provision in the event of the defeat of the Brigade involving fragmentation of the unit and attempts to initiate guerrilla operations were discussed. It was mutually agreed that these contingency plans would be discussed only down to the level of battalion commanders prior to the landing to avoid defeatist talk and apprehension concerning success of the operation. These discussions covered both the aspects of an element or elements of the Brigade becoming cutoff from the main body and attempting to break contact with the enemy, and assume guerrilla posture, as well as the possibility of the Brigade as a whole being cutoff from the sea as it advanced inland and the possibility of its assuming a defense in a redoubt area or fragmenting for guerrilla operations. It was mutually agreed that no specific plans for this eventuality could be pre-planned insofar as ground actions were concerned due both to the security provisions prohibiting early briefing of any Cuban personnel as to the specific locale of the landing and the circumstances surrounding the combat action which might lead to an element or the whole of the Brigade to assume such a contingency plan.

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However, the following general provisions governing such operation were mutually agreed to:

a. Resupply to the Brigade would be primarily by air with secondary reliance on clandestine maritime craft. Drop procedures would be provided for in the Operation Plan.

b. Communications would be directed to the base control outside the target area by the five RS-1's and seven TPL radios in operation with the Brigade. (Not in the command commo trailer.)

c. Tactical integrity would be preserved wherever possible and the operational size of guerrilla units would be dictated by the specific local conditions prevalent in the operation area.

d. Command lines would be preserved with the Brigade Commander or his designated representative, preferably a senior unit commander exercising operational control of specific operational areas.

e. Local recruits and volunteers would be accepted but the Brigade would maintain the 2506 personnel in command and key positions in all formations.

f. Local law and customs would be observed, provisions or resources commandeered would be paid for or receipts given.

g. Terrorist operations effecting personnel other than GOC governmental or military personnel would be avoided.

5. At Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, subsequent to briefing on the target area, these contingency provisions were further discussed with the same individuals (Brigade Commander, Deputy Commander and S-3) with further specifics addressed to the terrain of the Zapata area. The following points were covered:

a. Red Beach Task Force (2nd Bn, 5th Bn and Co. A of 1st Airborne Bn) would hold Red Beach area in the event Blue

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Beach was forced to withdraw to the north. Blue Beach Force would withdraw to the north along the coast road. Upon junction with Red Beach Task Force at the head of the bay, the Brigade would withdraw to the south and west into the greater Zapata area, breaking contact with the enemy and assuming guerrilla operational status or preparing for evacuation in increments as feasible. Alternate courses of action (evacuation or guerrilla status) were to be implemented as dictated by the circumstances.

b. In the event Red Beach was cutoff by the enemy from contact with Blue Beach, the same course of action was to be followed by the Red Beach Force. If, however, the coast road to the Blue Beach area was open and the Blue Beach Force holding, the Red Beach Force was to retire to the south to effect junction with Blue Beach.

c. Blue Beach Force, if cutoff from Red Beach and capable of breaking out, was to move as appropriate to either or both the following areas bordering Blue Beach and attempt to evade pursuit and initiate guerrilla operations.

(1) The area bounded on the north by El Jiqui and the Jaguey Grande Red Beach road to the northeastern edge of the swamp and thence south to the Covadonga/San Blas road and the road southwest to Playa Giron.

(2) The area to the east and north of Blue Beach bounded by the Playa Giron, San Blas, Covadonga road on the west thence southeast along the edge of the swamp to the western edge of Cienfuegos Bay.

d. It was mutually agreed that this plan might not be feasible if either major force (Red or Blue) were closely pressed by the enemy. Evacuation by sea was deemed undesirable by the three officers concerned who stated that they must fight and win or go down in defeat without recourse to evacuation and that they would not consider or discuss evacuation.

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6. The Brigade Commander prior to embarkation stated that he had discussed the details of this contingency plan with the commanders he considered appropriate. He stated that he considered this plan to be particularly suitable for the small airborne contingents dropping on DZ's 4 and 5 at Jocuma and San Miguel de Pita respectively. This contingency was further discussed with the Airborne Battalion Commander De Valle on the night of 17 April prior to takeoff by Lt. Col. Egan.

7. In summation it must be stated that little interest or enthusiasm was displayed by the Brigade personnel concerned for any aspect of the plan that involved retreat and defeat, to include this contingency for guerrilla operations plan. It was generally recognized and openly stated by the key officers that any military force involved in an airborne/amphibious landing and subsequent field operations against an enemy defending his homeland would have an extremely difficult time assuming a guerrilla role in any substantive force subsequent to defeat in the field. The defeat itself implied that the enemy in close combat had surrounded or ruptured and destroyed the Brigade as a military force, thus allowing only a fraction of its combat effectives to escape to assume a role as escapees and evaders with a limited potential for later guerrilla operations. 167a

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